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AUTHOR Sturtz, Alan J.
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ABSTRACT

In summer 1987, South Central Community College (SCCC), in Connecticut, entered into partnership agreements with four school districts in its service region to permit high school juniors and seniors with a B average or higher to enroll in and obtain high school and college credit for any regularly scheduled credit courses, at no charge to the student or the district. Under the program, students are invited to register for courses after: they have been identified by a high school counselor, SCCC's president has contacted their parents regarding the program, an orientation session for interested parents and students is completed, and the applications and recommendations are submitted. In fall 1987, 142 students from eight high schools enrolled in 34 different courses at SCCC, with nine students enrolling in more than one course. While 54% of the students performed at a C level or higher, one-third either withdrew or did not come to classes. In spring 1988, 99 students, including 33 continuing students, enrolled at SCCC. Most of the students who did not return for the second semester of the program indicated that other responsibilities had become too great, that they could not work and go to school at the same time, or that they had achieved their academic goals. In fall 1988, the program enrolled 144 students, including 12 returning students. While at least 75% of the participants were female each term, the ethnic distribution of the participants shifted radically from semester to semester. In fall 1988, nine of the students who participated in the program during fall 1987 and/or spring 1988 were enrolled as either full- or part-time degree-seeking students at SCCC. Appendixes include the partnership agreement; sample letters; statistical data on enrollments, student characteristics, grades, and courses; the questionnaire used to survey non-returning partnership students; and a list of problems and issues. (WJT)

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SYMBIOSIS: THE HIGH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

ALAN J. STURTZ
Director of Institutional Research
Planning and Development
South Central Community College
New Haven, CT

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SYMBIOSIS: THE HIGH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Alan J. Sturtz
Director of Institutional Research,
Planning and Development
South Central Community College
New Haven, Connecticut

Introduction

Symbiosis is the biological condition whereby two organisms evolve a dependency on each other that is mutually **beneficial**. This is the important part of the relationship. Given certain demographic conditions in our present society--an increasing age swell in the over-forty range due to the baby boom of the post- World War II years and the baby bust of about ten years ago that has caused a decline in the now secondary school and soon-to-be traditional college-age population-our higher education systems, probably our primary and secondary education systems as well, need to think about such relationships.

The High School Partnership Program, as developed by the Connecticut Community Colleges, is a logical component of the community college philosophy of providing postsecondary education to all who could benefit from it. The unique aspect of this program is that it is aimed primarily at those students who are **not** at the top of their classes. The Partnership Program is intended to involve more students than existing programs for the gifted; it is designed for the student who is not sure about college, its demands, its commitments on a student's educational responsibilities. Eligibility for the program is dependent upon a minimum scholastic average of 80 percent and upon the recommendation of the high school's principal and program coordinator.

In June 1987 the Board of Trustees for Regional Community Colleges in Connecticut authorized each community college to enter into partnership agreements with the superintendents of the public school districts in their respective service areas (see APPENDIX 1). These arrangements would allow high school seniors and juniors to enroll in credit courses offered by the community college. The anticipated outcome--the development of stronger linkages between the area high schools and the community colleges. The hook--the community college would pay the cost of tuition and fees would be waived; **and** the courses would fulfill both high school graduation and college program requirements. The student or the school district would be responsible for books and transportation costs.

The Program at South Central

South Central Community College entered into partnership agreements with four school districts in its service region during the summer of 1987. The president of the college contacted the superintendent of each school district in the service area and explained that, at no charge to either the student or the district, high school juniors and seniors with a B average or higher could enroll in any regularly scheduled credit courses at South Central in the fall semester. After a contact in the superintendent's office was named, the College's director of admissions explained the procedure: one counselor from each high school would identify the students and send their names and addresses to the college; the **president** then sent a letter to the **parents**, congratulating them and asking them to contact the school counselor for an application and recommendation. The counselor then scheduled an orientation session with the students and parents; either the president or the director of admissions attended as well. After the College received the completed application and recommendation, the students were invited to register for courses. [They also had the advantage of advanced registration sessions--after continuing, matriculated students--and not having to brave the crowd during open registration.]

Fall 1987

During fall 1987, 142 students from eight high schools in four towns enrolled in 34 different courses; nine students enrolled for more than one course. No limit on the number of credits was established in the agreement. Almost 80 percent of the students were female (compared to the college's 70 percent female population); almost 46 percent were black (v. 21 percent for the student body), 40 percent white (v. 66 percent) and almost 8 percent hispanic (v. 7.3 percent). Other or No Response accounted for the remaining students. [See APPENDIX 2 for tabular statistical information for each semester.]

While more than half the students (54.0 percent) performed at a better than satisfactory level (C or higher), there was concern about the one-third who either withdrew or did not show for classes. College officials felt that some students might not have been sufficiently prepared for the courses in which they enrolled. Beginning in spring 1988, high school partnership students were given reading placement tests before registration (as is the policy for regular enrollees); further, depending on the courses for which they were enrolling, English and/or mathematics placement tests would also be administered (again, standard College policy). An analysis of the spring grades showed that less than 28 percent of the students either withdrew or did not show for classes; 56.3

percent completed their courses with grades of C or higher.

Spring 1988

Ninety-nine students participated in the high school partnership the during spring 1988 from 15 high schools: 33 students continuing from fall to spring and 66 new students enrolled in 36 different courses; 14 enrolled in more than one course. The same procedure for selection was maintained from fall.

Fifty-five students (50.5 percent of those not returning) responded to surveys indicating reasons why they did not return in the spring and what their plans for college were (see APPENDIX 3). Thirty-seven respondents were seniors and 18 were juniors, all of whom said they have already enrolled or planned to enroll at another college. The most important reason most often selected for not returning was *other responsibilities became too great* (10: 3 seniors, 7 juniors), followed by *could not work and go to school at the same time* (9: 6 seniors, 3 juniors) and *achieved academic goals* (8: 5 seniors, 3 juniors). The second most important reason most often selected was, again, *other responsibilities became too great* (11: 8 seniors, 3 juniors) followed by *achieved my personal goals* (6: 5 seniors, 1 junior). Informal discussions between students and the director of admissions indicated that the other responsibilities were their high school courses: they were just over-extended.

Females constituted 75 percent of the high school partnership students enrolling in spring 1988; 28 percent were black, 49 percent were white and 20 percent were hispanic. This is attributable to the fact that most of the new students came from suburban high schools; the return rate from the New Haven high schools was only 12 percent.

Fall 1988

In its third semester of operation, the High School Partnership program enrolled 144 students: 132 new students, 12 returning (10 for a second semester, two for a third). Thirteen high schools were involved, three for the first time. The agreement was expanded, as well, to include non-public schools. Students enrolled in 46 different courses; seven students enrolled for more than one course. Seventy-six percent are female; more than two-thirds are white, 25 percent are black and four percent are hispanic. Again, suburban towns increased their participation; the New Haven school district did not actively participate.

In a program of this sort, a college also expects to receive some dividend for the time and effort expended. Nine students who participated in the High School Partnership Program during fall 1987 and/or spring 1988 enrolled as either full-time or part-time degree seeking students in fall

1988: a **4.3 percent** return on investment.

Conclusions

It appears that the program is fulfilling its objectives. During fall 1987, the first semester of the program, only South Central, of all the community colleges in Connecticut, recruited for the program. All 12 community college participated in spring 1988. Particularly for South Central, even though the number of participants declined by 30 percent from fall to spring, participation increased again the following fall. Spring 1989 enrollment will be watched closely to ascertain if this may be a developing trend (high fall, lower spring, as with regular college enrollment patterns) or just the newness of the program. In all, 339 students have participated in the program to date. Also, the number of participating high schools increased from fall to spring and three new schools were added in fall 1988. More than half the students in both fall 1987 and spring 1988 received grades of C or higher. These grades can be satisfactorily applied to high school graduation requirements, applied to degree program requirements or electives at South Central Community College or transferred as requirements or electives to most four-year colleges and universities.

Implications

The success of the High School Partnership Program has three primary implications: provide an early postsecondary education opportunity for a high school population that is usually not recognized, i.e., those who are not included in programs for "exemplary" students; permit some students who might have some trepidation toward attending college "try it for free;" and, in times when the number of high school graduates is declining (and this trend should continue for the next six years), allow the college to "recruit:" students may decide to enroll in a degree program after they graduate from high school. A secondary implication is that the High School Partnership Program serves to strengthen interinstitutional cooperation between the community college and the school districts. This type of a program could lead to a multitude of faculty exchanges, a better understanding of what is required in college that will hopefully assist the school districts in assessing their curricula, and the development of 1+1 or 2+2 programs with the districts for certificate or degree programs.

This project is the beginning of a longitudinal study for each semester the partnership agreement is in force.

APPENDIX 1

Board of Trustees Policy
Community College - High School Partnership Program

The board of trustees approves the establishment of community college-high school partnerships program as outlined below and authorizes the executive director to implement administrative policies and procedures necessary for the operation of the program. The executive director is authorized to allocated an amount not to exceed $50,000 from the resources of the tuition fund to support the cost of tuition for high school students in the program in the 1987-1988 fiscal year.

Community College - High School Partnerships Program

In August 1986, the national governors association issued a comprehensive report on education at all levels in the nation. One concern expressed in the report addressed the conviction that educational effectiveness and responsiveness are best achieved when students have choices about the programs and institutions they will attend. While making a number of recommendations concerning the expansion of choice for students, one which is of particular interest to the community colleges concerns a call for states to expand opportunities for high school students to attend accredited public postsecondary degree-granting institutions during their junior and senior years.

Such opportunities can provide especially talented high school students with more challenging educational experiences than may be available in high school. Particularly for such students in school districts which are unable to provide a broad range of course options, being able to enroll in a community college course can benefit both the student and the school district by making those options available. For capable students who may be turned off by high school, having the option to enroll in a college course or two, perhaps to meet high school graduation requirements, may prove an incentive to remaining in high school to graduate rather than dropping out.

Community colleges can benefit from such a program by providing opportunities to make high school students more aware of the range of community college programming available to them after high school as well as by offering the possibility for high school students to design a coherent program combining the junior and senior years of high school with the first two years of college to prepare for immediate employment opportunities after earning an associate degree.

In furtherance of the goal of expanded educational opportunity for high school students through increased educational choices, the community college-high school partnerships program is established. In the implementation of the program, it is intended to go beyond traditional programs which concentrate primarily on serving gifted high school students. Rather, it is intended that the community college-high school partnerships program be more expansive in providing an early college experience to a more diverse group of high school students, consistent with the mission of the community colleges.

Admission of high school students to community college classes under the community college-high school partnerships program shall be accomplished consistent with the following guidelines.

1. Each community college, acting through the president, may enter into written agreements with (a) the superintendents of schools of area school districts, (b) the directors of state regional vocational-technical high schools, and (c) the administrative heads of parochial high schools for the admission of high school students to community college classes. For the purposes of this program, high school shall include any local or regional high school and those incorporated or endowed high schools or academies operating as quasi-public institutions under sections 10-34 through 10-36 of the Connecticut general statutes and any nonprofit, nonpublic secondary

parochial school approved by the state board of education, provided that no such community college classes may be held at a parochial school.

2. Commonly accepted admissions guidelines must be established by the community college and the school district, within the following parameters:
   a. Juniors and seniors with a minimum of eighty percent scholastic average will be eligible for admission.
   b. Final selection will be based on the recommendation of the high school program coordinator and the principal.
   c. With the recommendation of the school principal, a flexible interpretation of the minimum scholastic average will be permissible.

3. The school district may offer concurrent or supplemental high school credit for coursed taken at a community college in accord with program guidelines.

4. High school students admitted to the program will be eligible to enroll in a maximum of two community college credit courses each semester on a space-available basis following the initial registration period for that semester. In the case of high school seniors in their last term, the two-course limit may be exceeded on the recommendation of the school principal.

5. The community college must make provision for academic advisement and other appropriate supportive services for the participants in the program.

6. The community college should utilize the preregistration process to assist participating high school students to make their preliminary selection of community college courses when they are preparing their high school schedules for the forthcoming term.

7. The community college may provide courses which would be of interest to high school students at existing off-campus sites in order to increase access to the program for high school students lacking transportation.

8. The community college should attempt to schedule sufficient courses at times convenient for high school students to attend college classes (e.g., late afternoons, evenings, and Saturdays).

9. The community college will pay the costs of tuition for the high school students participating in the program and will waive all fees.

10. Community college-high school partnerships program tuition will be paid for general fund credit courses only; extension and non-credit course costs will not be supported through the program.

11. The school district and/or the participating students will be responsible for the cost of books and transportation. The school district will be encouraged to purchase books to loan or give to participating students.

12. Subject to the limitation on the number of high school students who may be admitted to an individual community college within the program resources available to the system as a whole, the community college and the school district should agree upon the total number of participating students prior to the beginning of each semester.

(Adopted June 15, 1987; amended
February 22, 1988)

APPENDIX 1A
Facsimile Letter to Superintendents of Schools

Superintendent of Schools
[ ], CT

Dear :

As I recently shared with you, the Regional Community College System has developed a High School Partnership Program. I am enclosing a copy of the program as approved in a recent meeting of the Board of Trustees of Regional Community Colleges.

Dr. Joseph E. Magyar, our Director of Admissions, is the person responsible for the program and has already had initial discussions with your coordinator, [ ]. We at South Central are very excited about the opportunity this program will provide both our institutions in better serving students from the [ ] area. I look at this opportunity as the beginning towards a long-lasting cooperative relationship between our systems.

I wish you an enjoyable summer and I am sure we will be discussing this issue as the program progresses.

Sincerely,

Antonio Perez
President

APPENDIX 1B

Facsimile Letter to Parents
[Separate letters sent to daughters and sons]

Dear Parent:

In recognition of your daughter's/son's academic achievement, her/his counselor at [ ] High School has identified her/him as eligible to receive a scholarship, under the High School Partnership Program, to attend South Central Community College.

This scholarship is for the Fall 1987 semester and covers all tuition and fees. We are pleased to provide this opportunity for your daughter/son to continue to challenge herself/himself as well as get a head start on her college education. If she/he wishes to take advantage of this exceptional opportunity, she/he should contact her/his counselor at [telephone #].

As a parent you should be proud of your daughter's/son's academic success and continue to challenge her/him to achieve at a higher level. We look forward to having her/him take advantage of this opportunity and seeing her/him this fall.

Sincerely,

Antonio Perez
President

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

		Fall 87	Spring 88	Fall 88	Spring 89
Enrollment	Total	142	99	144	89
	New	142	66	132	61
	Continuing	0	33	12	28
Sex	Female	112	76	109	61
	Male	30	23	35	28
Race/ Ethnic	White	57	47	99	58
	Black	65	27	38	22
	Hispanic	11	20	11	8
	Other/NR	9	5	6	1
Status	Senior	71	63	83	62
	Junior	71	36	61	27

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

	Fall 87	Spring 88	Fall 88	Spring 89
A	19	15	30	
B	39	27	43	
C	23	25	25	
D	8	10	6	
F	15	6	11	
Incomplete	0	3	1	
No attendance	24	16	27	
Withdraw	22	17	36	

COURSE ENROLLMENT BY DISCIPLINE

	Fall 87	Spring 88	Fall 88	Spring 89
Accounting	7	17	9	9
Anthropology	1	0	0	0
Art	7	4	4	5
Biology	10	6	10	3
Business	24	3	18	19
Chemistry	4	3	3	3
Communicatn	0	2	4	1
Data Proc.	9	7	13	5
Dietetic Tech	0	0	1	0
Economics	1	0	3	2
Education	0	3	5	9
English	37	17	22	15
ESL	0	0	0	2
French	0	0	1	0
History	1	2	1	2
Hsptlty Mgmt	0	0	3	1
Human Devmt	0	0	2	0
Italian	0	0	6	1
Mathematics	11	4	9	12
Music	1	0	3	0
Office Admin.	9	6	7	4
Physics	1	4	0	1
Polit Science	1	0	5	0
Psychology	19	31	45	34
Reading	1	7	1	0
Sociology	5	2	2	7
Spanish	0	0	2	1

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FORMER PARTNERSHIP STUDENTS

(Enrolled in Fall 1987 but did not return in Spring 1988)

1. **The decision to leave a particular college can be motivated by a variety of reasons. Please circle the letters of all the reasons that contributed to your decision to leave our college. [Composite of all reasons of all respondents.]**

Academic Reasons

- **A. achieved my academic goals (13)**
- **B. needed a break from college (13)**
- **C. dissatisfied with my academic performance (7)**
- **D. dissatisfied with the quality of teaching (6)**
- **E. dissatisfied with the learning environment (5)**
- **F. course work not what I wanted (13)**
- **G. unsure of my academic goals (7)**

Other Reasons

- **H. achieved my personal goals (8)**
- **I. accepted a job (7)**
- **J. college experience not what I expected (3)**
- **K. few people I could identify with (3)**
- **L. moved out of the area (0)**
- **M. could not work and go to school at the same time (19)**
- **N. other responsibilities became to great (25)**
  (could not go to high school and college at the same time)
- **O. personal problems (4)**
- **P. transportation (7)**
- **Q. other (9)**

2. **From the list of reasons in question 1, please select the three most important reasons and enter their codes below.**

|_N_| **Most Important**
|_A_| **Second Most Important**
|_M_| **Third Most Important**

3. **Do you currently have plans for additional education?**

- **0. not at this time (4)**
- **1. yes, I plan to re-enroll at this college (0)**
- **2. yes, I have already enrolled at another college (27)**
- **3. yes, I plan to enroll at another college (22)**
- **4. I am currently undecided about any additional education (1)**

B. If you circled responses 2 or 3, please write in the name of the college you plan to attend or are attending._____

PROBLEMS/ISSUES

1. **Improper placement by high school counselors**

2. **Difficulty of attracting high school students in the Fall when high schools and colleges are beginning classes at the same time.**

3. **Competition with 4-year college programs with the same goal, e.g. UConn's Advanced Placement program.**

4. **Protectionism of high schools. Teachers fear that IISPP will siphon off their best students.**

5. **Unavailability of college courses scheduled at times convenient to the high school students.**

6. **Inadequate counseling at high school and college.**

7. **Should the program recruit students who need developmental work? Should it be restricted to top 20 % of class?**

8. **Should high school students be tested before registration at the college?**

9. **60% failure rate for juniors compared to 31% for seniors. Should the screening proces for juniors be more rigorous?**